

latter case, however, the fact that Amini has a population of house crows and Kadmat has none, may be the deciding factor.

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October 25, 1953.

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## 12. THE DUCK SEASON IN NORTH INDIA, 1955-56

I am sending you separately by parcel post the skin of a duck shot on X'mas day which I believe to be a female or immature male of the Bronzecapped Duck or 'Falcated Teal'. It was obtained at a jheel about one mile north of Anta on the Hansi Branch of the Western Jumna Canal on the borders of the Karnal District, Punjab (I), and Jind District of Pepsu.

As regards my experience of duck this year [season 1955-56] in these parts, at first sight they would appear to be unexpectedly scarce. But on close investigation I have found that they are present in enormous numbers—perhaps in greater numbers than ever before seen in my 25 years experience of this locality. It seems to me, however, that they have noticeably changed their haunts and habits, in some cases leaving favourite jheels of former years quite unfrequented. I attribute this partly to over-shooting and harassment, partly to the enormous areas under water this year, and partly to the fact that the permanent jheels are all about 3 ft. deeper than usual. Thus surface feeders tend to favour temporary and shallow flood water which has the additional advantage of being unknown to most shikaris, since it is dry land in a normal year. Also persecution has made them leave, during daylight hours, permanent jheels which provide good feeding, but they flight in regularly in large numbers after dark, leaving again at first light. A good example of this is the famous Najafgarh-Gurgaon jheel about 20 miles from here, which is some 3 miles long this year. At the start of the season it was populated by duck and teal in almost unbelievable numbers, and a large number of Greylag Geese. As the shooting season progressed thousands of birds could be seen fighting in and out at dusk and first light, while thousands more learnt to seek safety in the middle and ignored the firing; thus one hears many unobservant shikaris saying that duck are scarcer than usual this year on their experience of this place alone. But during a 10 days X'mas camp 80 miles from here in the Karnal/Jind Districts, which is little known and inaccessible, we were scarcely ever out of sight of duck, even when partridge shooting, and were amazed at their abundance. Even here, however, they were restive and constantly on the move, and there was a noticeable flight every evening to feeding places evidently far distant.

As regards species of the migrants, Pintail have been seen in very large numbers, much more so than usual. All four pochard have also been seen in some abundance probably attracted by the large areas of

<sup>1</sup> Identification confirmed.—EDS.